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ABSTRACT

The author examines the use of oral bilingual models in programs for the hearing impaired, contending that the native language of a hearing impaired child of hearing parents is frequently sign language. It is suggested that classrooms for the hearing impaired could combine numerous languages (Signed English, Signing Exact English, and American Sign Language) and modes according to models of monoliterate and partial bilingualism. It is also pointed out that a native or near native signing staff would be necessary if such a model were adopted. (CL)

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Applying Bilingual Models in Classrooms for the Hearing Impaired

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Applying Bilingual Models in Classrooms for the Hearing Impaired

Many students in Hearing Impairment have ignored what the field of Bilingual Education has to offer . . . just as people in Bilingual Education may have never have thought to include the bilingualism of those who are hearing impaired in the framework of their study. This paper looks at the possibilities of such an inclusion by exploring several instructional models which have been developed to address the issues of language use during the presentation of subject matter in oral bilingual classrooms.

Not all educators in the field of Hearing Impairment would agree that hearing impaired people using both English and a form of Sign Language are bilingual. Bilingualism has traditionally meant two oral languages. It is possible for deaf persons to be bilingual, however, either if they can use two spoken languages (i.e. Laurent Clerc, the first teacher of the deaf in the United States could read and write in French and English) or if they can use two signed languages (i.e. British Sign Language and American Sign Language.)

If a person both signs and speaks then one could view the two modes as expressing the same language or two distinctly separate ones. The use of the adjective bimodal emphasizes the difference between speech and sign as sources for communication. Bimodalism intrinsically implies monolingualism; one language simply being in another modality (Klima and Bellugi, 1972). In the bimodal sense, Sign Language refers to a disglossic continuum of manual language including the dialects of American Sign Language (A.S.L.), Signed English (S.E.), Signing Exact English (S.E.E.), etc. (Schlesigner, 1978). Sign Language is not viewed by all as a standardized language (Charrow, 1975) and is considered by some to be a creole (Woodward, 1973). In a creole sense, some sign is perhaps analgous to utterances like "Tu no me catchas," where the languages are mixed (overheard in a preschool classroom in San Antonio). Bimodalism could

also refer to fingerspelling in combination with speech, although fingerspelling is rarely used in isolation (without sign) except in educational situations (i.e. Rochester Method).

Some authors have labeled native knowledge of A.S.L. and English as bilingualism (Stokoe, 1975, 1976; Hatfield et. al, 1978). These authors state that two distinct languages are operating. In Table I, the variety of possible combinations of languages and/or systems is illustrated:

Table I

Languages and Systems Using Sign

1. Mono-lingual languages:
   a. ASL (American Sign Language)
   b. oral English
2. Bi-modal (mono-lingual) systems:
   a. oral English / fingerspelling
   b. oral English / Signed English
   c. oral English / S.E.E.
3. Bilingual of bimodal?
   a. oral English followed by ASL
   b. ASL followed by oral English

Educators in hearing impairment have had difficulties in deciding which languages and which modes should be utilized in classrooms for hearing impaired students. Perhaps the most important piece of empirical research in the last decade for the field of hearing impairment was a study that compared seven preschool programs for the hearing impaired over a four year period (Moores, Weis, and Goodwin, 1979). The programs were chosen because they represented varying classroom philosophies (i.e. total communication, Rochester Method, oral-aural, auditory-based, etc.). Although the study

concluded that students educated under the total communication or Rochester method performed the highest over other participants on test of speech intelligibility, academic achievement (e.g. pre-math, pre-reading, etc.), classroom interaction, cognitive functioning, etc., the study's most serious conclusion was that no philosophical approach provided methodology that gave a hearing impaired student skills comparable to those of their hearing counterparts. Deaf children generally show a four-year delay in vocabulary comprehension; the average deaf adult reads at about a fourth grade level (Monteith, 1980). We, as educators in the field of hearing impairment, whatever our philosophies, are failing the majority of our students.

I believe that another piece of the puzzle to effective programming for hearing impaired students is the application of oral bilingual models (used to teach the Spanish-speaking and other such groups in the United States) to program for the hearing impaired. Such applications could be beneficial but all have important problems, and compromises would have to be made in the innovative programs that attempt such applications. In this paper, several models used to classify oral bilingual programs in terms of their linguistic goals have been utilized. The advantages and disadvantages for hearing impaired students will be discussed.

The Immersion or "single medium" model (Mackey, 1971 in Ramier, 1980) implies that a student is "immersed" in the dominant language (i.e. English) for the entire school day; the school staff uses the dominant language at all times and students are discouraged from speaking in their home language. Some bilingual educators feel the immersion model is ineffective. Cummins (1979) reported that "for the minority language children instruction mainly through the native language has been shown to be just as or more effective in promoting dominant language proficiency as instruction (solely) though the dominant language (p. 202)."

The immersion model closely parallels the traditional approach to teaching children who are hearing impaired. Those students who have a native language and use sign language because their parents are deaf (about 10% of the hearing impaired population) and those students who learn sign language from peers in residential dorms, find their language base un-utilized, ignored, and sometimes punished at school. English is used by most school staff, perhaps supplemented with Signed English or Signing Exact English, and English-as-a-Second-Language-like strategies are employed to teach surface structures in the dominant language. This has not proved to be a successful model in educating most children. "Drawbacks from the Hearing Impaired (H.I.)" in Table II includes an important issue that can be discussed at this point:

What is the native language of a hearing impaired child of hearing parents? Unlike Spanish-speaking or other non-English speaking children in the United States, ninety percent of those children who are hearing impaired do not use English as do their parents. Most deaf children have poor comprehension and delayed production of English, and their ability to speak English is hardly natural. Beyond this simplistic statement, research is needed to provide language descriptions of the language abilities of hearing impaired children of hearing parents.

Table II

Model	Drawbacks for H.I.	Advantages for H.I.
1. Immersion: English is used at school. Other sign systems may be used to teach English. (see 2. below) ASL is usually ignored.	The "native language ability of most H.I. students has not been studied. Native-like English ability appears an unlikely possibility. Most H.I. students never acquire adult proficiency in English.	The philosophy is upheld that hearing impaired students can be successful members of the hearing culture.

Fishman and Lovas (1970 in Ramirez, 1980) discussed monoliterate bilingualism (in which the native language is developed and used in oral communication and the

dominant language is used to establish literacy (reading and writing) and to teach the content areas), and partial bilingualism (in which both languages are used for both literacy instruction and the teaching of subject matter; more content areas (e.g. math and science) are taught in the dominant language; and the native language is ordinarily used for ethnic related areas (e.g. social studies and literature). Ramirez (1980) discussed the preview-review approach, the concurrent model, and the alternate language program, in which the two (oral) languages are interchanged in various degrees throughout the day.

Classrooms for the hearing impaired could utilize these models by choosing to combine numerous languages and modes. These are illustrated in Table III. They may be especially workable in that there are relatively few reading materials, especially beyond the preschool level, available in ASL, Signed English or Signing Exact English.

If Signed English or Signing Exact English were consistently used to translate oral English to a manual mode, would this improve the academic abilities of the hearing impaired child? Part of the answer to this question lies in the willingness of teachers, all other school staff, parents, neighbors, etc. to use one of these sign systems in a consistent manner so that it becomes the pseudo-native language of the hearing impaired child. The child would then, like hearing children, begin to develop a language base that he or she could monitor and therefore communicate naturally. However, preliminary research seems to indicate that if parents begin using sign systems with their children at an early age, normal language acquisition occurs (Wilbur, 1979).

If one argues that ASL, a language unlike English, is actually the native language of all hearing impaired students (including those with hearing parents) then although the same necessity for an environment of understandable communication is required, providing it would be much more difficult. Not

only are fewer people fluent in ASL (e.g. hearing impaired or hearing children of deaf parents) but few of these are also trained teachers of the hearing impaired. In addition, parents could hardly be expected to be competent ASL signers upon learning that their child was hearing impaired - and while they are adjusting to the emotional stress such realization brings - then one could quickly learn Russian and provide a new-born with natural stimulation.

Just as a dedicated bilingual-bicultural staff is an essential part of any bilingual program, a native or near-native signing staff would be necessary should a school system for the hearing impaired adopt the model.

The implication of choosing ASL or a sign system (i.e. Signed English or Signing Exact English, etc.), gaining parents' cooperation, and finding materials would again be important points to consider. "A real equality," states Skutnabb-Kangas (1977) about the transition oral bilingual program, "would presuppose a school taking the possibilities of the individual child as the starting point and accepting each child on the child's own terms. Instead of neglecting what the child already has when he or she comes to the school, one ought to build further on this basis, use it as a foundation for the new experiences that the school will give the child (p. 184)." Hearing impaired students could begin in ASL as a native or pseudo-native language and transition to oral English and ASL, oral English/fingerspelling, oral English/Signed English, oral English/Signing Exact English, or simply oral English alone (depending on an individual's ability to use speech and lipreading skills). These drawbacks and advantages utilizing the mono-literate and partial bilingualism models are summarized in Table III.

Table III

Models	Drawbacks for H.I.	Advantages for H.I.
2.a. mono-literate bilingualism (ASL, S.E., SEE, etc. used for communication and English used for reading and writing)	curriculum would perhaps involve more depth but less variety (i.e. math computation in the AM and story problems using ASL in the PM)	Teachers could rotate so fewer native signers would be necessary. Adult deaf could be used in classrooms to supply ASL input.

Table III (cont'd.)

Models	Drawbacks for H.I.	Advantages for H.I.
2.b. partial bilingualism (all Table I, 1 and 2 possible)	Native signers or signers with near native ability who are also teachers would be hard to find in the numbers required. Materials in ASL are virtually non-existent. Few S.E. or S.E.E. materials exist. Parents may not acquire signing ability.	ASL and the deaf culture would be included in the curriculum (e.g. poetry, humor in ASL) Child would develop a language base in one language. Later acquisition English would build on this base.

The bilingual models presented in this paper only exist in theory. I suspect that most oral bilingual school systems, across programs and within classrooms, have mixed and changed these models to meet individual student needs. This, too, would need to occur should these models be adapted in classrooms for the hearing impaired. The purity of the models, however, is not the issue. -beginning to use them- to change the ineffective models now employed in classrooms for the hearing impaired - that is the issue.

Just as Rock Point in Arizona has become a symbol in demonstrating that a bilingual-bicultural school can change the lives of the Native Americans it serves, we in the field of hearing impairment are waiting for hearing impaired adults to take over their education and to adopt a model of instruction that will successfully benefit their constituents. Meanwhile, perhaps those of us who are educators in the field should consider applying oral bilingual models to hearing impaired programs.

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